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April 3, 2008

Tree-planting campaign provides job skills for Maryland inmates

By ERIN JULIUS (erinj@herald-mail.com)

Inmates plant trees by the administration buildings at Maryland Correctional Institution. (Yvette May/Staff Photographer)



Natural Resource Manager Joe Calzarette and Maryland Correctional Institution inmate Dennis Holmes finish planting a tree in the West Woods of the Antietam National Battlefield Wednesday morning. (Yvette May/Staff Photographer)



Natural Resource Manager Joe Calzarette and Maryland Correctional Institution inmate Dennis Holmes finish planting a tree Wednesday in the west woods of the Antietam National Battlefield. (Yvette May/Staff Photographer)

WASHINGTON COUNTY — State prison inmates planted trees Wednesday morning at Antietam National Battlefield and near Maryland Correctional Institution.

They were joined by Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services Secretary Gary D. Maynard.

Wielding a shiny new shovel, Maynard and Division of Correction Commissioner John Michael Stouffer shoveled dirt in around a young sapling on a yard near administrative offices next to MCI.

Planting trees is a way for inmates to pay something back to society, Maynard said during an interview Tuesday.

Wednesday's Arbor Day observance is intended to launch a campaign by the department to plant 1 million trees across the state.

Part of Maynard's plan involves having what he termed "tree farms" at several state prisons, including MCI.

He said having such tree farms would give inmates a chance to work and learn a skill.

"The more work for inmates, the better," Maynard said Wednesday.

Inmates planted about 5,000 trees across the state Wednesday.

About 25 inmates were planting Wednesday, and another crew would be assigned to care for the trees, said Wayne Webb, facility administrator for the prerelease unit at the prison complex south of Hagerstown.

By caring for trees, inmates can learn about caring for something, responsibility and job skills, Maynard said.

With a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, the prison system was able to plant about 80 larger, hardwood trees near a watershed area at the prisons, officials said.

Prison officials said all 1 million trees should be planted in the next two to three years.



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Department of Public Safety and Correctional Service Secretary Gary D. Maynard steadies a tree Wednesday as Division of Correction Commissioner John Michael Stouffer shovels dirt. (Yvette May/Staff Photographer)

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Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services Secretary Gary D. Maynard and Division of Correction Commissioner J. Michael Stouffer were at the Maryland Correctional Institution Wednesday to kick off the planting of 1 million trees across Maryland. (Dustin Lawyer/Videographer)

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